# IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE "THIRTEENTH MONTH" OF THE YOUTH BUILDING THE FUTURE PROGRAM

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## Abstract

This research quantitatively analyzes the impact of the so-called "thirteenth month" within the Youth Building the Future Program (PJCF), focusing exclusively on the active employment policy component, that is, on the employability outcomes of young beneficiaries who complete the program and seek formal employment through the National Employment Service (SNE). A quantitative methodology was used, based on SNE administrative records for the period 2020–2024. Using this information, two analysis groups were formed: a treatment group, comprised of young people enrolled in the "thirteenth month," and a control group, composed of young people who requested job placement services from the SNE but did not participate in the PJCF program. The *Inverse Probability method was used to estimate the causal impact of the "thirteenth month." Weighting* (IPW), which allows balancing the observable differences between both groups and estimating the *Average Treatment Effect*. The results indicate that participation in the "thirteenth month" program is associated with a negative and statistically significant effect on formal employability: young people graduating from the PJCF program have a 77.96% lower probability of formal employment compared to those who did not participate but also sought employment through the National Employment Service (SNE). However, these findings should be interpreted with caution, particularly due to the indirect verification of formal employment in the control group. Therefore, it is evident that further evaluations using the original PJCF database are needed to validate these findings.

**Keywords**: Employability, impact, active employment policies.

## Introduction

Over the years, Mexico has faced insufficient labor inclusion. This research understands inclusion as a fundamental component of social development that seeks to guarantee that members of the workforce obtain decent jobs, well-paid wages, and

access to social protection. Labor inclusion aims to ensure that when the workforce enters the labor market, it does so in dignified employment (ECLAC, 2023).

In response to insufficient labor inclusion, starting in 2018, the Mexican government designed a new labor model with key elements such as a new labor justice system, freedom and democracy in unions, and a federal conciliation center and registry. As part of the Mexican government's efforts to improve labor inclusion, it created the Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro (Youth Building the Future) Program (PJCF).

The PJCF (Youth Training Program) aimed to provide on-the- job training to young people aged 18-29. The incentives these young people receive include financial support equivalent to the minimum wage , depending on the year, medical insurance through the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS), and, starting in 2020, the "thirteenth month" (a stipend or bonus payment). This bonus consists of former PJCF beneficiaries receiving assistance from the National Employment Service (SNE) in their job placement efforts to find employment ( STyPS , 2021; 2022; 2023 and 2024). This set of incentives and job placement mechanisms is part of the regulatory framework governing formal employment in Mexico, which establishes minimum rights regarding working hours, wages, and access to social security, as stipulated in the Federal Labor Law (2025).

The design of the PJCF, and the "thirteenth month," makes it a hybrid program within the context of active and passive labor market policies. This is because the program is active, on the one hand, by improving the employability of beneficiaries through workplace assistance and job[1] placement support via the "thirteenth month," and on the other hand, it is passive by providing welfare support through health insurance and a stipend equivalent to medical pay.

This research focuses solely on the active employment policy component and analyzes the impact of the "thirteenth month" (the period of early retirement). The research question is: what is the impact of the PJCF (Youth Care Fund) on the employability of young people who are part of the " thirteenth month" ? An Inverse Probability Wighting (IPW), model is used to calculate the impact.

## Reference And Conceptual Framework

During his 2018 address, then-President Andrés Manuel López Obrador made a total of 100 government commitments. Commitment number 17 of this agenda focused specifically on addressing the needs of 2,300,000 young people who were

[1]Throughout this investigation, it is considered that the program does not provide training, since there is no body responsible for verifying each training session that beneficiaries receive at the workplace. What beneficiaries do receive is assistance at a workplace for twelve months.

neither studying nor working (López, 2018). In fulfillment of this commitment, the PJCF (Youth Training and Employment Program) began operating in 2019. The program's general objective is " to include young people aged 18 to 29 who are neither studying nor working in productive activities, fostering their connection with economic units willing and able to provide them with on-the-job training" ( STyPS , 2021a; 2022a; 2023a and 2024a).

To achieve the overall objective, the program establishes four specific objectives. The first consists of providing scholarships to beneficiaries for a period of twelve months. The second ensures the provision of health insurance to these same beneficiaries for the same period. The third objective involves issuing certificates that accredit the work experience acquired by the participants, and the fourth seeks to facilitate the productive inclusion of the beneficiaries ( STyPS , 2021a; 2022a; 2023a and 2024a).

The target population of the PJCF comprises young people aged 18 to 29 who are inactive in the labor market and in education. Its coverage is nationwide, with a priority focus on municipalities with high levels of marginalization or those with high rates of violence. To guarantee access to the program, both a digital platform and mobile offices are available to extend coverage to areas without internet connectivity ( STyPS , 2021a; 2022a; 2023a and 2024a).

Once beneficiaries graduate from the program, a complementary strategy known as "Month Thirteen" is activated. This initiative provides options for young people to increase their employability by participating in training courses or, if they are looking for a job and were not hired at the workplace where they completed their training, the National Employment Service (SNE) offers them job placement services ( STyPS , 2021a; 2022a; 2023a and 2024a).

**“Thirteenth month ”**

To support graduates of the PJCF and their effective integration into the labor market, the SNE utilizes the Employment Support Program (PAE). The overall objective of the PAE is "to achieve the labor market integration of job seekers through intermediation and labor mobility actions, with preferential attention to those who face greater barriers to employment" ( STyPS , 2021b; 2022b; 2023b and 2024b).

The PAE is structured into two subprograms: job placement and labor mobility. The job placement subprogram is of particular interest to this research, as it is through this subprogram that the "Thirteenth Month" program seeks to connect graduates of the PJCF with employment. It is crucial to note that participation in this

strategy is voluntary and is managed by the graduates themselves through the Employment Portal, the National Employment Service Offices (OSNE), or Job Fairs ( STyPS , 2021b; 2022b; 2023b and 2024b).

### Hybrid nature of the PJCF

The combined design of the PJCF and the "Thirteenth Month" strategy gives the program a hybrid nature, placing it at the intersection of active and passive labor market policies. This duality is evident in that, on the one hand, the program seeks to improve young people's employability through twelve months of on-the-job training and, optionally, offers job placement services, thus defining it as an active policy. On the other hand, by providing a cash subsidy and access to social security (health insurance), it also functions as a passive policy (CONEVAL, 2022).

**Table 1.** Nature of the PJCF

| Active | Passive |
|---|---|
| Attendance at a workplace<br>Employment intermediation | Support equal to the minimum wage<br>Health insurance |

Source: Own elaboration based on Jacinto (2024).

Table 1 details the components of this approach. The active policy component is evident in the efforts to improve youth employability through 12 months of on-the-job training and, for those who are actively seeking employment, the job placement services offered by the National Employment Service (SNE), which aim to connect them with formal employment and reduce their reliance on informal networks. Additionally, the passive policy component is manifested in the financial support equivalent to the minimum wage and the medical insurance provided by the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) during the on-the-job training period.

The results achieved by the PJCF during the 2019-2024 period have been the provision of services to almost three million young people (2,973,449) ( STyPS , 2024c) and the enrollment of 240,648 young people in the "thirteenth month[2]." The results seem encouraging, but what implications does providing services to this number of young people have on the labor market? The following section seeks to answer this question.

[2]This figure is not the same as that presented in the sixth STyPS report of 2024. This is because it was found in the SNE database that there were young people who did not complete the twelve months of the PJCF, young people older than they could be, and duplicate records.

## Overview of the youth labor market in Mexico

Prior to the start of the Joint Fiscal Resilience Plan (JFP), Mexico's economic growth showed a trend of sluggishness. In 2018, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by a mere 2%. This slowdown worsened in 2019, with a decrease of -0.4%, and reached its most critical point in 2020 with a severe contraction of -8.4% due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it grew by 6% in 2021 as a result of the post-pandemic economic recovery, the subsequent period (2022-2024) has shown low growth, averaging 2.8% annually (World Bank, 2025).

Limited economic growth has not been enough to resolve the persistent problem of the young population segment that is neither studying nor working. In 2018, prior to the PJCF (Program for the Promotion of Youth and Children), there were 23,773,773 young people, of whom 21.7% were in this situation. The composition of this group showed that the majority were women (88.1%) compared to 11.9% men. Within this segment, 88.2% were engaged in domestic work, 9.4% in other occupations, and 2.6% were pensioners or disabled (INEGI, 2018).

Six years after the implementation of the Youth Participation Program (PJCF), by 2025, the youth population had reached 23,554,379. Of this total, the percentage of young people who are neither studying nor working had decreased to 17.5%. However, the gender participation gap had widened slightly, with 90% of women and 10% of men in this group. The predominant activities continued to be housework (86%), followed by other occupations (10.5%) and those receiving pensions or disability benefits (3.5%) (INEGI, 2025). These data reveal a decrease in the overall proportion of young people who are neither studying nor working, but simultaneously show an increase in female participation within this inactive group. This suggests that the program has not succeeded in reversing the trend of female inactivity, even though this population group represents a priority for the PJCF.

In addition to addressing youth inactivity, the Youth Employment and Training Program (PJCF) also aims to reduce youth unemployment. Before the program, the youth unemployment rate was 6.1% in 2018 (INEGI, 2018). By 2025, this rate had decreased marginally to 5.1% (INEGI, 2025). This reduction of just one percentage point indicates a limited improvement in the decrease in youth unemployment, raising questions about the program's effectiveness.

While the Youth Employment and Training Program (PJCF) has achieved a marginal reduction in youth inactivity and unemployment, the most pressing and structural problem facing the youth labor market is the high rate of informality. Despite the work experience gained by young people at the workplaces and the promised job placement services in the program's thirteenth month, informal employment continues to significantly affect them.

Table 2 presents a comparison of informality trends in the Mexican youth labor market for the years 2018 and 2025, emphasizing sociodemographic factors and the disadvantages associated with informal employment. It highlights that in 2018, 55.7% of young people worked in the informal sector (INEGI, 2018), a figure that remained virtually unchanged in 2025, reporting 55.3% informal employment (INEGI, 2025).

**Table 2.** Comparison between formal and informal work for young people aged 18-29 according to their sociodemographic characteristics.

| **Characteristics** | **Informal** | | **Formal** | | **Total** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | 2018 | 2025 | 2018 | 2025 | 2018 | 2025 |
| Total | 7,572,589 | 7,701,165 | 6,005,447 | 6,213,123 | 13,578,036 | 13,914,288 |
| **Sex** | | | | | | |
| Man | 57.2% | 55.8% | 42.8% | 44.2% | 100% | 100% |
| Women | 52.8% | 54.6% | 47.2% | 45.4% | 100% | 100% |
| **Level of education** | | | | | | |
| Maximum basic education | 49.6% | 40.1% | 27.8% | 20% | 100% | 100% |
| upper secondary education | 33.9% | 37.9% | 36.4% | 39.4% | 100% | 100% |
| Higher education | 16.5% | 22% | 35.8% | 40.6% | 100% | 100% |

Source: Prepared by the author based on INEGI 2018 and 2025.

Looking at Table 2, several trends stand out. Regarding the gender gap in informality, women's participation in this sector has increased slightly, from 52.8% in 2018 to 54.6% in 2025 (relative to all informal women), while men's participation has decreased from 57.2% to 55.8% (relative to all informal men). This exacerbates the trend observed in youth inactivity and suggests that young women continue to face greater barriers to accessing formal employment. With respect to the relationship between education and formality, a positive trend is observed; by 2025, the proportion of young people with higher education in formal employment is significantly higher (40.6%) compared to those with basic education (20%). However, it is relevant that the percentage of young people with higher education in the informal sector has also increased, from 16.5% in 2018 to 22% in 2025, indicating that even those with higher levels of education are also being employed in the informal sector.

Regarding occupational structure, the outlook for informal youth workers remained similar. In 2018, 66% of informal workers were wage earners and 15% were self-employed (INEGI, 2018). By 2025, these figures remained consistent, with

67.8% informal wage earners and 17.5% self-employed (INEGI, 2025).

Currently, according to INEGI (2025), the distribution of young people by sector of activity is predominantly concentrated in services (64%) and industry and manufacturing (27.2%). These figures are very similar to those of 2018, when young people were also mainly employed in the services sector (60%) and in industry and manufacturing (29%) (INEGI, 2018).

A key characteristic of informal work is the prevalence of part-time and long working hours. In 2018, one in four informal workers worked less than 35 hours. By 2025, this gap had widened, with one in three informal workers working less than 35 hours. At the same time, in 2018, 22.5% of informal workers worked more than 48 hours, a figure that increased to 24.7% in 2025, despite this being illegal under the Federal Labor Law[3] and in a context where reducing the maximum workweek to 40 hours is being debated.

Precarious working conditions and low wages for young people in the informal sector remain a constant. In 2018, of all young people receiving wages: 28% earned up to the minimum wage, 47% earned between one and two minimum wages, and 25% earned more than two minimum wages. By 2025, a sharp change is observed: 70% of young people earn at most the minimum wage, 26% earn between one and two minimum wages, and only the remaining 4% earn more than two minimum wages. This significant shift in wage distribution can be attributed to the sustained annual increase in the minimum wage in Mexico since 2019. In this context, the financial support provided by the PJCF (Youth Support Program), equivalent to the minimum wage, becomes a financially attractive option for many young people employed in the informal sector.

Finally, regarding job search strategies, personal networks (family, friends, or acquaintances) remained the primary method in 2018, used by 55.45% of young people. This was followed by direct visits to employment centers (16.43%), while public and private intermediation services had a marginal share (0.63%). By 2025, these trends continued: networks remained the main channel (54%), although direct visits to employment centers decreased (13.23%), and the use of public and private intermediation services declined even further (0.48%). This underscores the persistence of informality in labor market entry mechanisms and the limited effectiveness of formal channels. In this sense, it appears that the PJCF (Youth Employment Program) is also not proving effective with the "thirteenth month" and the intervention of the National Employment Service (SNE).

[3]Federal labor law establishes a maximum of 48 hours that can be worked weekly (Federal Labor Law, 2025).

In summary, the results in the youth labor market show a picture of marginal changes despite the implementation of the Youth Compensation Program (PJCF). The reduction in key indicators such as the labor inactivity rate is minimal, youth unemployment remains low but with a slight decrease, and informality, although it has declined, has done so marginally. This situation represents a considerable challenge for the Mexican government, especially regarding the active labor market policy component, given that no other youth program in Latin America has allocated such a substantial investment, amounting to USD$7,577,442,361.25 (during the 2019-2024 period) ( STyPS , 2024c). In light of the results observed in the youth labor market, questions arise about the program's actual effectiveness, making it necessary to analyze what specific impact evaluations of the PJCF reveal.

## PCJF Assessments

The first study analyzing the impact of the PJCF was conducted by the National Minimum Wage Commission (2021), part of the STyPS . It evaluated the program's impact during the 2019 COVID-19 pandemic, using the 2020 National Household Income and Expenditure Survey (ENIGH) and propensity score matching (PSM) to calculate youth employability.

The average results from CONASAMI (2021) indicate that young people participating in the program have a 26% employability rate compared to other young people with similar characteristics who were not part of the program. They also found that the quarterly income is higher (MXN $8,222.00) than that of other young people and, during the pandemic, the program served as a minimum safety net (reducing the probability of food insecurity in beneficiary households by 3.4% and the probability of lacking access to health insurance by 20%).

The main criticism of this evaluation is its presentation of results indicating that the employability of young graduates from the program is double that of those who are not part of the program. This result is a comparison of averages from 14,823,203 young people, of whom 3,493,274 are employed. However, the program's impact is 26%, not 50% as presented by the CNSM. The second criticism of this evaluation is that it does not use the database held by the PJCF Unit, which would be ideal for assessing the program.

The second impact assessment of the PJCF is that of Rubio *et al.* (2022). They use Okun's Law as an instrument to assess the impact and a difference-in-differences model using the National Survey of Occupation and Employment (ENOE) for the period 2005-2021 and the beneficiary registry of the Secretary of Welfare from 2019-2021.

Rubio *et al.* (2022) found no impact on reducing unemployment. A likely explanation for this is that Okun's Law seeks to explain youth unemployment; however, the program is designed to address not only unemployment but also informal employment and youth inactivity—that is, those who are neither studying nor working.

The third impact evaluation used is that of CONASAMI (2023), which again uses the 2022 ENIGH survey and PSM data. Their results show that the program impacts youth employability by 31.8% compared to those who did not participate in the program. They also found an increase in beneficiaries' income (MXN $9,557.00) compared to those without support, and access to health insurance, which is 25% higher for those participating in the program.

Once again, the criticism of CONASAMI (2023) concerns the presentation of results and the database used. Regarding the first point, they state at the beginning of the research that the employability of young people in the PJCF program is 60% and that they have three times the employability of young people who are not part of the program. This is incorrect because they are again comparing averages of 24,153,726 young people who are not part of the program. As for the second point, they again use a survey and not the database available at the PJCF unit.

The fourth and final study used on the program's impact is that of Sámano and Reyes (2025). The authors analyze the impact of the PJCF on homicides using interrupted time series and linear regression in the states of Coahuila-Baja California and Chiapas-Tabasco as control groups.

The results from Sámano and Reyes (2025) reported a nationwide reduction in intentional homicides and crime due to the program. However, when comparing the results at the state level, they found contradictions that prevented them from concluding that the program reduced the number of homicides and crime.

Based on the available impact evaluations of the program, we can establish that no evaluation was found that uses the database held by the PJCF unit. Nor was an evaluation found specifically for the "thirteenth month." The most frequently used method in the available studies is the PSM (Program Evaluation Method). The results found regarding the program's effects indicate an apparent impact on employability and, to some extent, on the employment landscape for young people.

This article aligns with the research line on the program's impact on employability and specifically focuses on the "thirteenth month." The question it seeks to answer is: What is the impact of the PJCF on the employability of young people who are part of the "thirteenth month" ?.

## Methodological Design

This research adopted a quantitative methodological approach focused on evaluating the impact of the Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro (PJCF) program, specifically its active employment component known as "month thirteen." The central objective is to estimate the causal effect of this job placement strategy on the probability of obtaining formal employment, defined as registration with the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS). Since program allocation is not random, the analysis requires the use of quasi-experimental methods to control for selection bias and ensure comparability between participating and non-participating youth.

From an empirical standpoint, the ideal strategy for evaluating the impact of the PJCF would have been access to the comprehensive database of the Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro Program Unit (UPJCF). However, given the impossibility of obtaining this information, the administrative records of the National Employment Service (SNE) were used, which constitute a relevant alternative source for analyzing the job placement process after program completion. This methodological decision involves specific assumptions that are explained throughout this section in order to clarify the limitations of the analysis.

### Data sources

The databases used for this impact evaluation of the PJCF were provided by the National Employment Service Unit (USNE), which is part of the Ministry of Labor in Mexico, and are included in its administrative records. The information covers the period 2020-2024 for PJCF graduates participating in the " thirteenth month" and the period 2022-2024 for the remaining young people who requested services from the National Employment Service (SNE).

Information on the youth population not from the PJCF (Youth Care Program) was initially divided by service modality: job fairs, services at labor intermediation offices, and services through the employment portal. To eliminate duplication, the data was cross-referenced using the Unique Population Registry Code (CURP), resulting in 446,039 observations of young people not from the PJCF. For the Treatment Group, young people who were beneficiaries of the PJCF were filtered by their CURP, by program completion date, and by age. After this filtering, only enrollments up to the thirteenth month for the period 2022 to 2024 were considered, resulting in 38,555 observations[4].

[4]Although the total number of young people enrolled since 2020 is 240,648.

The verification of employment success for graduates of the PJCF (Treated Group) is carried out through a direct comparison of the National Employment Service (SNE) databases with those of the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) and the Institute for Social Security and Services for State Workers (ISSSTE), confirming that the young people have obtained formal employment based on the vacancy they applied for. However, for the Control Group (the remaining young people served by the SNE), this detailed verification is not a standard procedure. For this study, the SNE agreed to cross-reference its data with the IMSS using the Unique Population Registry Code (CURP), which guarantees that the individuals in this group are also formally employed. This asymmetry introduces a crucial methodological assumption: it is assumed that the employment success of the Control Group is attributable to the SNE's job placement services.

In both databases, the key variables (sex, age, education, and care) were recoded to ensure homogeneity. The outcome variable, employment success (employed), was defined based on IMSS discharge status. The treatment variable was created assuming that PJCF graduates received the treatment (the "thirteenth month" intervention), and the remaining young people who requested SNE services constituted the control group.

**Description and characteristics of the control and treatment group**

The final database used for the impact assessment consists of a total of 484,594 observations and shows a significant imbalance in the composition of the groups before the application of the IPW method. The control group (the remaining youth from the SNE) is significantly larger, with 446,039 individuals, while the treatment group (graduates of the PJCF/"Mes Trece") comprises 38,555 individuals. The descriptive analysis of the key covariates, detailed in Table 3, highlights several pre-intervention differences.

**Table 3.** Descriptive analysis of the covariates of the control and treatment groups

| Variables | Control Group (rest of young people) | Treatment Group (JCF) |
|---|---|---|
| **Sex** | | |
| Men | 40.2% | 42.5% |
| Women | 57.5% | 57.5% |
| **Age** | | |
| 18-21 | 25.8% | 8.5% |
| 22-25 | 38.6% | 38.6% |
| >25 | 35.4% | 52.7% |
| **Schooling** | | |
| No schooling | 15.9% | 10.9% |
| Basic | 29.5% | 13.1% |
| Higher education | 25.1% | 31.9% |
| Superior | 29.5% | 44.1% |
| **Type of care** | | |
| Job portal | 63.7% | 87.4% |
| Offices | 29.7% | 12.6% |
| Fairs | 6.6% | 0% |
| **Employment** | | |
| Employee | 66.8% | 28.4% |
| Unemployed | 33.2% | 71.6% |
| **Total observations** | 446 039 | 38,555 |

Source: Prepared by the author based on SNE (2024a and b).

Regarding age, the control group is significantly younger, with 25.8% in the 18-21 age range, compared to only 8.5% in the treatment group. In contrast, the treatment group is older, with 52.7% of participants aged 25 or older, compared to 35.4% in the control group. With respect to education, the treatment group tends toward a higher level of education; 44.1% of its members have higher education, compared to 29.5% in the control group, and a smaller proportion of young people with only basic education. Finally, the primary method of access to job portals for the treatment group (87.4%) is employment portals, while the control group shows a broader distribution, although also dominated by portals (63.7%).

Regarding the outcome variable, the overall analysis reveals a significant disparity in the employment rate. The control group shows a high employment rate of 66.8%, while the treatment group shows a notably lower employment rate of 28.4%.

**Method for evaluating the impact of Inverse Probability Wighting (IPW)**

*Propensity Score* (PS) method was used , and due to the large volume of data (484,594 observations), the IPW technique was chosen instead of traditional matching . The central objective of IPW (Huntington-Klein, 2021) is to eliminate selection bias from observable characteristics, generating a pseudopopulation where observations are comparable.

For the estimate to be valid, Conditional Ignorability (CIA) is assumed , where the treatment $D_i$ is independent of the potential outcome $(Y_i(1), Y_i(0))$conditional on $X_i$, that is:

$$(Y_i(1), Y_i(0)) \perp D_i \mid X_i$$

Likewise, the assumption of common support is necessary , which guarantees that all individuals have a positive probability of receiving or not receiving the treatment.

As a first step , the Propensity was estimated Score ($e(X_i)$), defined as the probability that an individual $i$, given their characteristics $X_i$, will be in the treatment group ($D_i$=0). This PS was estimated using a logistic regression model:

$$e(X_i) = P(D_i = 1|X_i) = \frac{exp(\beta' X_i)}{1+exp(\beta' X_i)}$$ *(Ecuación 1),*

Where $D_i$ is the treatment variable and $X_i$ is the vector of covariates.

Unlike matching , the IPW method creates a pseudopopulation by assigning each individual a weight , which is the inverse of their observed treatment probability. This ensures that the entire sample is used and $\hat{w}_i$ that the distribution of covariates is balanced across groups.

The *average was estimated Treatment Effect* (ATE), which is the impact of the program if the entire population, that is, both treated and untreated, had received the treatment. The weights $w_i$ for the ATE estimate are given by

$$w_i = \frac{D_i}{e(X_i)} + \frac{1-D_i}{1-e(X_i)}$$ *(Ecuación 2),*

To reduce the instability that extreme weights (observations $e(X_i)$very close to 0 or 1) can generate, these were truncated to the 1st and 99th percentiles. The balance of covariates after weighting was verified using the Standardized Mean Difference (SMD), ensuring that all the *SMD*<0.1, in the weighted pseudopopulation.

Finally, to estimate the causal effect, $\tau_{ATE}$ a robust weighted logistic regression was performed, where the coefficient $\alpha_1$ represents the Log-Odds of the treatment effect:

$$log\left(\frac{P(Y_i=1|D_i,X_i)}{1-P(Y_i=1|D_i,X_i)}\right) = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 D_i + \gamma' X_i \textit{(Ecuación 3)},$$

Where the parameter of interest is $\alpha_1$, which can be translated as Odds Ratio (OR) by $exp(\alpha_1)$.

## Model Results

The results of the impact evaluation of the "thirteenth month" of the Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro (PJCF) Program are presented based on the estimation of a weighted logistic regression model using *Inverse Probability Weighting* (IPW) in Table 4. The coefficients are presented as *Odds Ratios* (OR), estimated from the IPW-weighted logistic regression model. An OR greater than 1 indicates a higher odds of job success (formal employment) compared to the reference category, while an OR less than 1 indicates a lower *odds*.

This strategy allowed the construction of a balanced pseudopopulation between the treatment group, graduates of the PJCF enrolled in the "thirteenth month", and the control group, young people who requested job placement services from the National Employment Service (SNE) without having participated in the program, controlling for observable differences in sex, age, education and type of care.

**Table 4.** Impact of the PJCF on formal employment (Logistic regression weighted by IPW).

| Variable | Odds Ratio (OR) | 95% CI |
|---|---|---|
| PJCF (Treatment) | 0.2204*** | [0.2143, 0.2267] |
| Sex: Male | 1.2498*** | [1.2247, 1.2755] |
| Education: Basic | 0.6478*** | [0.6048, 0.6939] |
| Education: Secondary | 0.9683* | [0.9414, 0.9961] |
| Higher education | 1.4944*** | [1.4466, 1.5437] |
| Attention: Job Fair | 1.1195*** | [1.0777, 1.1630] |
| Attention: Job Portal | 1.1295*** | [1.1108, 1.1486] |
| (Intercept) | 1.8875*** | [1.7517, 2.0338] |

Note: The omitted reference group for the education variables is upper secondary education. The reference group for sex and service modality is women and service at intermediary offices, respectively. Significance is presented as *$p$<0.05, **$p$<0.01and ***$p$<0.001.
Source: Own elaboration.

The central finding of the evaluation indicates that, after balancing the observed characteristics using IPW weighting, the PJCF program has a negative and highly significant effect on the probability of employment success. The estimated odds ratio for the treatment is 0.2204( p<0.001). This implies that the odds of

obtaining formal employment for PJCF graduates are 77.96% minors (*Cálculo:* (0.2204-1)×100) compared to untreated youth who also sought SNE intermediation services. The estimate is considered robust, given that the confidence interval (95% CI: [0.2143,0.2267]) is significantly below one (*OR*=1). Although the model indicates a negative impact, this interpretation is subject to the methodological assumption that the control group found employment thanks to SNE services. Verification of formal employment was carried out solely by checking status with the IMSS, without direct confirmation of the job vacancy. This limitation implies that the control group includes individuals who may have found employment through means other than the SNE, which could bias the magnitude of the ATE.

The inclusion of covariates in the weighted model confirmed several patterns consistent with the labor market. In terms of sex, the analysis indicates that young men (Sex: Male *OR*=1.2498) exhibit a 24.98% higher *odds* of job success compared to women, the reference category.

Education was confirmed as a key predictor. Young people with higher education gained the most, showing a 49.44% higher odds of formal employment (*OR*=1.4944) compared to the reference group, which is upper secondary education. Conversely, young people with Basic Education (*OR*=0.6478) face a disadvantage, with a 35.22% lower odds of job success than the reference group. Those with secondary education (*OR*=0.9683) showed a marginally significant effect, indicating odds very close to the reference group.

With respect to the service modality, job searching through Job Fairs (*OR*=1.1195) and the Employment Portal (*OR*=1.1295) was associated with an approximate increase of1 2% in the odds of obtaining formal employment. This increase is statistically significant and is interpreted in comparison with the attention received in labor intermediation offices, the reference category omitted in the model.

## Discussion

The results obtained in this research contribute to the debate on the effectiveness of the Jóvenes Construyendo el Futuro (PJCF) program, particularly regarding its active policy component focused on job placement through the so-called "thirteenth month." The estimation of a negative and statistically significant impact on the formal labor market integration of program graduates should be interpreted as the result of a specific methodology, in addition to considering the conceptual and empirical frameworks already developed in the literature on employment policies in contexts of high informality.

From a structural perspective, the findings are consistent with the diagnosis put forward by ECLAC (2023), which indicates that labor inclusion in Latin America cannot be evaluated solely based on occupational placement, but rather on the

quality, stability, and formality of employment. In this sense, the fact that graduates of the PJCF face lower relative probabilities of formal placement suggests that the "thirteenth month" labor intermediation strategy fails to modify the structural mechanisms of access to employment in a market characterized by precariousness and persistent informality, as documented by INEGI data (2018; 2025).

Furthermore, the results include an analysis of the program's hybrid nature. As CONEVAL (2022) points out, programs that combine active and passive policies can create incentive tensions if there is no clear link between training, skills certification, and effective job demand. In the case of the PJCF, the operational emphasis on financial support and health insurance (passive components) appears to have outperformed the active job placement component, which could explain why the transition to formal employment does not consistently materialize upon program completion.

The estimated negative impact for the "thirteenth month" also allows for a critical reinterpretation of the results reported by CONASAMI (2021; 2023). While those evaluations find positive effects of the PJCF on employability using national surveys and comparisons of means, this study, by focusing specifically on the job placement stage and using administrative records from the National Employment Service (SNE), shows that these effects do not necessarily hold true when analyzing the concrete process of formal employment. This methodological difference reinforces the criticism already raised in the document regarding the use of databases not designed to evaluate specific program mechanisms and the aggregated presentation of results, which can exaggerate the impacts.

Similarly, the findings are consistent with those of Rubio *et al.* (2022), who found no significant impact of the Youth Employment Program (PJCF) on youth unemployment. Although their approach focuses on macroeconomic indicators and the use of Okun's Law, their results suggest that the program fails to substantially influence key indicators of the youth labor market. This study complements this evidence by showing that, even at the micro level of labor intermediation, the program's effect is limited and even adverse in terms of formal employment.

Furthermore, the results associated with the covariates reinforce diagnoses extensively documented in the manuscript itself. The persistent gender gap in formal labor market participation, evidenced by the lower probability of employment for women, is consistent with INEGI data (2018; 2025), which show a greater concentration of women in both inactivity and informality. This suggests that the PJCF, despite its broad coverage, has not succeeded in reversing structural inequalities that exceed the scope of an isolated training and job placement policy.

The determining role of educational attainment, meanwhile, confirms that active employment policies, such as the "thirteenth month" program, operate in a complementary, not a substitute, manner for educational pathways. As observed in the youth labor market landscape, even young people with higher education face increasing levels of informality, which limits the potential of labor intermediation to generate quality formal employment on a sustained basis.

Regarding the National Employment Service's (SNE) service delivery methods, the results favoring the employment portal and job fairs are consistent with the administrative evidence presented by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (STyPS ) (2021–2024), which indicates a growing emphasis on digital mechanisms and direct job placement events. However, the fact that these positive effects do not offset the negative impact of the "thirteenth month" reinforces the hypothesis that the central problem lies not in the placement channel itself, but in the limited demand for formal employment capable of absorbing the program's graduates.

The use of administrative records from the National Employment Service (SNE) implies assuming that the labor market integration observed in the control group is attributable to intermediation services, an assumption that, if not fully met, could overestimate the performance of that group. However, as Huntington-Klein (2021) points out, the transparency of the assumptions and the robustness of the quasi-experimental design allow the results to be interpreted as a valid approximation of the causal effect, particularly when the confidence intervals remain clearly far from one.

Overall, the analysis of results and a comparison with existing literature suggest that the job placement component of the PJCF faces structural limitations in achieving its objective: improving the formal employability of young people. Far from invalidating the program's rationale, these findings reinforce the need to rethink the design of the "thirteenth month" (a specific program for young people) and to more effectively integrate training, skills certification, and the actual demands of the labor market, especially in a context where informality continues to be the dominant feature of youth employment.

## Conclusions

The results of this research allow for a critical and well-founded assessment of the impact of the Youth Building the Future Program (PJCF), particularly its active labor market component focused on job placement through the so-called "thirteenth month." This assessment is based on the use of administrative records from the National Employment Service (SNE) and the application of an inverse probability model. Weighting (IPW), it was identified that participation in this strategy is

associated with a substantial reduction in the probability of formal labor insertion of young graduates of the program, estimated at 77.96% compared to non-participating young people who also used the labor intermediation services of the SNE.

This conclusion should be interpreted with caution. The findings obtained using SNE databases could partially refute previous evaluations such as those by CONASAMI (2021 or 2024). However, for conclusive validation and a deeper understanding of the program's impact, it is essential that future research access and evaluate the program using the original and complete UPJCF database.

Regarding labor market indicators, the results obtained only partially favor the program. While decreases in inactivity, unemployment, and informal youth employment rates are observed, these are minimal and do not justify the magnitude of the investment. This limited change is particularly concerning given that the Youth Employment Program (PJCF) concentrates the majority of the STyPS 's resources . In employment policies, the program has the largest budget allocation in all of Latin America, having been allocated USD $7,577,442,361.25 during the 2019-2024 period.

The hybrid nature of the PJCF (Youth Training Program) conceptually represents a very favorable aspect for youth employability. However, in practice, the active labor market policy component is not being adequately utilized. This ineffectiveness manifests itself on two main fronts: first, workplace attendance is not providing young people with the desired employability, as demonstrated by the low subsequent job placement rates (26% in 2020 and 31.8% in 2022). Second, the job placement services offered through the "thirteenth month" and the National Employment Service (SNE) are also not being fully utilized, as a very low number of graduates register and actively participate in this crucial job placement stage. These findings underscore the need to review the design and implementation mechanisms of the PJCF and the "thirteenth month."

It is important to emphasize that the conclusions of this study should be interpreted considering its methodological limitations. The inability to access the comprehensive database of the Youth Building the Future Program Unit and the need to assume that the labor market integration of the control group is attributable to the services of the National Employment Service (SNE) introduce assumptions that could influence the magnitude of the estimated impact. Nevertheless, the transparency of these assumptions and the robustness of the quasi-experimental design allow the results to be considered a valid and conservative approximation of the "thirteenth month" effect.

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